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F313 THE CITY OF KODAKOK

The natives frequently speak of the "cows of Nyikang". This expression is used in two different meanings, one mythological and one real.

Once Nyikang sought a cow in the river in a fish-net. It had no ears or horns. This cow was the beginning of a sacred herd. If anyone touched them who was not of their association, he died. They live in the river and come out to feed at night. This herd was carried away; some say the Dorobo took them, while others affirm that it was the Turks. From the dung of this herd the "calves of dunging" were gained. The calves were made by burning the dung of the sacred cattle. They are preserved at Wau and other villages dedicated to Nyikang, and are applied to ordeals, when cases of adultery are to be tried. When the woman has confessed, but the man denies, they take recourse to the "calves of dunging". An old chief, taking a spear in his hand, stands erect and offers the following prayer: "Cow Nyikang, the calves are yours! If this man has not had intercourse with this woman, may he escape! But if he has had intercourse with the woman, may he die! If this woman accuses falsely, may she escape?" After this the chief takes some of the ashes on his hand and strikes the man with it. Then the one who has sworn falsely, will die.

The other applications of the term is to cows devoted to Nyikang by the king. Each year the king gives a steer and a cow to the villages in which the cows of Nyikang are kept. The male is killed and used for food. If any person not belonging to the attending herdsmen, eats of the meat of these animals, he becomes a servant of Nyikang, and must take up his residence in that village. The female is kept for breeding purposes. The *Kwe Nikya* (vide page 130) herd these cattle. The *chief* of these villages of Nyikang seems to be Wau. If an ominous wind is said to come down, he would die.

The third factor in the religion of the Shilluk is the *ajwaka*, and what is connected with him. *Ajwaka* is the title doctor or sorcerer, the word is probably derived from *jwak* "God", and would then mean: "one who is dependent on God", or "who has to do with God". As his most prominent business is to procure rain, Europeans generally call him rain-maker. He is the mediator between the people and Nyikang, he leads the dances and prayers to Nyikang, and presides at the sacrificial ceremonies. He leads also exhibitions by whistling charms. Sick people apply to him with the present of a sheep or goat, or even an ox; the animal is killed, and the contents of its stomach are laid on the sick person's body; or the skin of the animal is cut into strips and these are fastened below the knee of the patient. This is also applied as a protective against dangers on a journey. When in the dry season the cattle are brought across the river, the sorcerer has to prepare charms to prevent them from being seized by crocodiles. Besides this he is able to perform miracles, to kill

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year round and only the youths go to the cattle camps in the riverain pastures, which are never more than a few miles from their villages. The Shilluk are not a pastoral people in the sense that the Nuer and Dinka are, and rely to a much greater extent on agricultural products and on fish, for they are skilled and experienced fishermen. Since their migration to their present territory, it is probable that they have never had a very large cattle population, for their riverain pasture is not extensive.[1]

Shilluk clans[2] are not territorial in basis for they are highly segmented and widely distributed throughout the settlements of Shilluk country; as corporate units they have no real significance except at times of national festivals, and then only in the sphere of ritual and ceremony.

The Shilluk are divided into four main classes or groups of clans:

(i) The *Awareh*: the royal house, who trace descent from Nyikang and from whom the *reth* of the Shilluk is chosen.

(ii) The *nwor*: a distributed branch of the royal house who do not differ from commoners except in the special functions they perform at the installation of the *reth*, during his lifetime, and at his death. They are a distinct exogamous clan, though they may intermarry with the *Awareh* despite common ancestry.

(iii) The *colo*: the name often collectively to the main body of the Shilluk clans of which a large number trace descent patrilineally from (*a*) the original followers of Nyikang, (*b*) individuals of other tribes who have migrated and settled in Shilluk country from early times onwards, and (*c*) ancestors who are lost in antiquity, but who may have occupied Shilluk country before the arrival of Nyikang.

(iv) The *bang reth*: the personal attendants of the *reth*, his wives or wives of past *reths*; the descendants of royal slaves obtained by capture; those who volunteer to serve him by reason of their possession by the spirit of Nyikang,[3] and paupers who volunteer for this form of service in order to exist at all. Finally, there are the alleged descendants of those who were enslaved because their close kinsmen committed homicide, though this statement must be examined more critically later.

There are no real caste distinctions between *Awareh*, *nwor*, *colo*, and *bang reth* and, apart from restrictions on the marriages of daughters of a living or past *reth*, they intermarry freely. The *Awareh*, however, by reason of their connexion with Nyikang and subsequent *reths*, are treated with special respect and this extends to those *bang reth* who have close association with the shrines of Nyikang or of dead kings. The Shilluk basic social structure is very similar to that of the Nuer and Dinka, though there are important differences. The segmentation of the population into territorial units and of the clans into localized lineages has, however, a greater permanency and stability. The distinctive feature of the Shilluk political structure is the existence of an established and theoretically omnipotent monarchy and it is in the political sphere

[1] An accurate census taken during the veterinary campaign against rinderpest-immunization gives a figure of 23,000. This was after a very severe epidemic in 1928 and it may be assumed that they had lost at least 50 per cent. of their stock. A human census, accurate to any one within 15 per cent., gives a population figure of 110,000. The ratio of human population to cattle population is therefore between 1:03 and 1:05. Cf. Nuer where highest ratio given is 1:03 and the lowest 1:01.

[2] *Jwo*: Literally 'descendants of', prefixing the name of the clan, 'Jwo Obidi'—the descendants of Obidi—and so on.

[3] Often now attendants at the many shrines of Nyikang.

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the storm is very severe an offering must also be made. A bow must be placed in front of the door. If no bow is in the house then a fish spear, or something else made from iron, may be used instead. When a bow or spear is thus offered it is taken back to the ordinary uses after the storm. In case they can find nothing of iron to offer, one of the inmates of the house takes a handful of dura and kneels in front of the door. He then turns back the door-mat, and, reaching out, he casts the grain upward into the air.

Sometimes the lightning strikes (mul aqqe, heaven hits). In former times when a house was struck by lightning each house in the circle had a rope tied around the apex of the cone-shaped roof. A bit of skin from the sacrificed sheep was supposed to be tied to each house. Then the houses were all connected by ropes running to these ropes. I have seen this arrangement only once. To the rope at the apex of the house old bones and snail shells are often tied. They are afraid to move the walls of the house that has been struck, and so the walls are pushed inward. If someone has been killed in the house the walls form a sort of earth covering, so he is not buried as other men. The custom in regard to electrical disturbances are changing. Many of the rites now practised are borrowed for the Dinkas, but seem to be well established at the present time.

According to the present usage, when a house is struck, the owner usually calls a servant of Deñ (Bäñ Deñ). After the servant of Deñ arrives he surveys the place and then exclaims, "Deñ says bring an ox." If the people are poor he may demand a sheep only. He usually adds, "I do not ask for this offering, but Deñ asks for it." The offering is then brought, it is killed, cooked and eaten in the same place. After the meat has been eaten the bones are carefully collected, and a large branch from a bigig tree is stuck up on the site of the house. Then the bones of the sacrifice, with its horns and tail, are hung on this branch. Each guest partaking of the feast is supposed to offer an iron bracelet, and these bracelets are also hung on the bigig branch.

A person who has had a narrow escape from death by lightning may become a servant of Deñ (Bäñ Deñ), if he so desires. When they travel they say, "Deñ asks for this," and few people will refuse them when they beg in that way. In one case a person who dreamed he had been struck by lightning became a servant of Deñ.

28: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1918 F223 Shilluk F223

the chief of the district offers a sacrifice to Nhialic so that the rains may come. After the prayer has been offered, and the rain comes, if it comes with a rushing sound they say that Nhialic walks in the storm, and the rushing sound is made by his passing.

Once the departed king returned so that he could be seen by the eye of man. The first kings did not die, but ascended. At last a time came when the kings were to be identified more fully with the people, and they were to be buried. The proper burial of the first king to receive that attention from his subjects, was of such great importance that Nhialic returned to give minute instructions as to how the king should be buried. Some say that he actually appeared in the flesh. Others say that he appeared to a certain old chief in a dream, and made known to him how one of his kingly descendants should be buried.

At certain times the old woman, who has charge of his sacred house places food in it for him. At the time of new moon the food is placed in his house, and may be offered to him one day, or four days. Very early in the morning the food is taken out, and eaten by the attendants. They say that Nhialic has tasted it. Should the offering entirely disappear in the night it would be taken as a serious omen. Milk is also placed in the house with the food. Should the old woman keeper of the sacred house dream of the king during the month, she places an offering of food in his house.

Similar offerings are made to the other kings, and also they may be made to an ancestor.

When the harvest is beginning, before the people may eat of their grain they must take an offering of their first fruits to Nhialic. After Nhialic has been given his taste of the first fruits the people may eat freely. An offering of the first fruits is also taken to each of the sacred houses of the other kings.

Many of them take an offering of the first fruits to the grave of an ancestor, usually the father. When offering to a father the grain is made into a sort of butter, and poured out on the grave. The man then says that he has given his father a taste. The worship at the family shrine does not when the immediate family is all gone. In the case of the kings it is kept by all the people.

The power of Nhialic is upheld to some extent by a class of religious